



Summer Family Reunion (Part 4)

Intent

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Good morning. Man, what an honor to be back. I was just here a few weeks ago. I remember the Sunday that I was here, we were preparing for the very next Sunday to be a Sunday where we, as a church, were going to celebrate, a baptism. I think Paster Ted had told me that you had 16 baptisms scheduled, for one Sunday. I was like Man, that's going to go long, that's a lot of baptisms on a Sunday. You ended up baptizing, on that Sunday.... Let me make sure I got this right, 89 people. That's amazing.

I hope that you know that for such a time as this God has given you something really special at this church. And I think God get's the glory, but I want to honor you. Well done, good and faithful servant. So many people are coming to Christ. So many people are growing in Christ. I think a big part of that is also just the leader that you have. I love Pastor Ted and Amy and think the world of them. So, again, God gets the glory, but I want to honor them and just say, I hope you know what you've got in him. He is an I credible, incredible leader and pastor

He cheated at golf, but that's beside the point. I just wanted to throw that out. He took me to play golf. He didn't cheat. He's a great golfer as well.

I'm going to preach to you today on *Intent*. That's going to be the title of the Message and I don't know a lot of people who really talk a lot about this, but I want to kind of confess something to you right off the bat and say that as we unpack the passages that we are going to unpack today, I think the best way to unpack it is to be vulnerable and to be transparent and raw with some illustrations on how this is something that is very real to me in my own life

And I want you to know that if we are really going to get into this together, I have to model it for you, and let you know this is not somebody who has this figured out, but somebody who continues to struggle with this in my own faith and, as you hear these stories, you are either going to go, "That is one of the most ungodly people who has ever been on stage, or you are going to so, Man, at least he's letting me know that we are all in this together. We are all in this struggle together.

So, we are going to talk about intent today and as we do, we are going to look at a moment in history where Jesus preaches the greatest sermon that's ever been taught. So, we are going to go to the Sermon on the Mount and if you have your bible's we will go together to Mathew 6. While you are going there, let me just kind of give us a little context before the text.

Jesus is addressing believers in this sermon. And as he is addressing believers, he knows that non-believers are peeking in. So, Jesus is talking to his dirty dozen. And while he is talking to believers, non-believers are getting to listen in on all the family reunion, the family discussion that they are having. And Jesus wants, in this moment, to communicate to both. And he wants the believers in the room to know that as they are out doing what they are doing in the Kingdom of God, that what is just as important as what they are doing is why they are doing it. And so, Jesus, on the sermon on the mount, actually talks

about them, and we are going to look at one of them today. He talks about the idea of charity, like doing good works for those who are hurting, those who need help, and then he talks about fasting and then he talks about prayer, but he sets some footings before he gives them instruction on how to do it, about the intent on why they would do what they are doing.

Today, we are going to talk about prayer, but this is so much more than prayer. This is about everything and anything in the Christian life. As he's giving us these instructions, we know the Lord's prayer, but we, so often fast forward and in the shadow of that, this flyby little couple of passages I think are pivotal for us on, again, not just doing what we are doing, but why we are doing it.

Let me ask you this way. When is it ever wrong to do the right thing? Is it ever wrong to do the right thing? Well, I want to push back and say, it can be wrong to do the right thing. It can always be wrong to do the right thing when you're doing the right thing, but you are doing it for the wrong reason.

Don't get me wrong, I would rather you do the right thing for the wrong reason than to do the wrong thing for the wrong reason. But God is a God who doesn't want to settle for just motion when he actually wants so much more for us.

Judas is going to address that with us as we look at these few verses together.

This is the Sermon on the Mount – Mathew 6: 5 -7

Jesus says “And when you pray... By the way, his assumption is that we are going to pray. It's not if you pray, but when you pray. He does the same thing by the way, when he talks about fasting. When you fast.

He does the same thing when he talks about being giving and being charitable to people. he says, "When you do this..." So, when we are working out our faith, when we are exercising it, sweating it out, when we are doing what we are doing as believers, he says, when you pray, don't be like the hypocrites. So, he's about to tell us what a hypocrite looks like. Don't be like these hypocrites for they love to pray. Stop right there. Don't read any further. Now let me just say, there is nothing wrong with praying. Prayer is tuning your heart frequency to the heart of God. Prayer is honest conversation with God. Prayer is a gift.

We get to have communion with God. It's not one way, it's not a solo, it's a conversation. We get to have conversations with God. It's a gift.

Amen? So, what's making them a hypocrite is not the fact that they are praying, they actually don't just pray, they love to pray but look at the reason for the season. Look at why they are doing what they are doing. He's saying, before you begin to do this good thing, check yourself so that you won't wreck yourself. He's saying, when they are praying, they love to pray and then the rest of it explains it. Standing in the synagogue and on the street corners so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

But when you pray, instead, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like these pagans where they think they are going to be heard because of their many words. So, in the shadow of the Lord's prayer, Jesus addresses the posture of the human heart more than the workings of it. he talks really about the posture of our heart and the first thing he says is, 'When you are

praying , intention matters. When you are praying, ask yourself, “Why am I doing what I’m doing. When you are doing the good thing, when you, in a few minutes when we come back to sing again, or a little while ago when you were singing, and we all maybe you had your hand up. That’s awesome that you have your hand up, it’s awesome that you that you are singing, but are you having your hand up so people around you can see you have your hand up and think you are godly? Or do you have your hand up because you are in a heart posture of surrender before God?

So, he’s addressing why. He says why am I doing what I’m doing?

One time..., I we had just built this new home. Do you notice when you build a new home, everybody comes to see your home. Everybody just wants to see your new home. A buddy of mine calls me and he says, “Hey, I just woke up this morning and we are on a tour bus and we are driving today, and it dawned on me that around lunch time, we are going to be in your town. He goes, “We are going to pull over somewhere and grab lunch, do you want to come and meet us?

I just said to him on the phone, I was like, Well, why don’t you just come to the house for lunch. I’ll grill you a big, fat steak. He was like, “Well, don’t you want to ask your wife... I’m like, I’m the man of this house... In the back of my mind I was thinking I need to ask for permission. So, I hang up the phone and I go to my wife and I’m like hey we have 11 people on a tour bus that are about to pull up in about 45 minutes to come eat with us. She goes, the house is a mess. I said, “Honey, I’ll clean the house if you’ll to the grocery store and get some food.

So she is going to the grocery store and I’m picking up. Picking up to me is like out of sight, out of mind. Just put stuff in closets and stuff.

So, I'm doing all of this and I come down to the basement, and I will never forget it, I walked in and as soon as I walked into the basement, I was picking up and picking up, and then I opened up this closet. As you go down the stairs to the basement, there is this closet that you can make in your basement that is right under the stairs. It's kind of a V shaped closet It's the outline of the stairs going down. I opened up and it dawned on me that all the rooms in the house needed cleaning, but this one closet didn't because when we built the house, we ordered extra thick shaggy carpet for this little closet that was under the stairs.

We ordered that because we wanted that to be our prayer closet and my wife had put a prayer bench at the end of it, she put some prayer journals at the end of it. I had bought a big pillow and I put it there because we were going to spend hours on bended knee and we were going to need the pillow and we were going to need all this different stuff and we had vacuumed it and cleaned it. for like two to three months, we had been in this house and all the rooms needed cleaning, but the prayer closet had been untouched from the day we moved in.

I Looked at it and I saw the vacuum marks and I saw the pillow all fluffy, and I thought to myself, My buddy is going to be here in about 45 minutes and he's going to come and see the house and when he comes to see the house, He's going to open up this prayer closet and he's going to see that it's never been used.

And the Holy Spirit said, You beloved little idiot, you are shooting so low. You want to impress some Christian worship leader and the sad thing is you might just get what you want. You might get your earthly reward. How is that working for you?

So, he's saying to you and me "But I want more for you than action. I want more for you than performance. I want the posture of your heart; I want you to do the right thing but for the right reasons.

So, intention is everything.

But it's not just intention, he says, "Beyond that, ultimately remember this is who you are doing it with, not just why am I doing this, but who am I doing this with? This is ultimately about its intimacy. Prayer is an intimate conversation, a vulnerable conversation. Fasting is an intimate communing with God. And An act of service is an intimate communion with God. Everything and anything in the Christian life ultimately is not about being effective but about being intimate. It's about growing in my walk with God and my love affair with God, the heart behind every spiritual discipline is so that God and I would be deeper and deeper with one another. That's why the psalmist says *Deep calls to Deep*. A deep God doesn't want us to have a shallow faith. He want's us to have deep rooted faith. So, God is saying, into me, who are we doing this with?

Who is the primary person that you do spiritual disciplines in the Christian life with? That You acknowledge the presence of God. Practice the presence of God.

One time, I was going to be at one of my heroes churches, preaching on a Sunday. This guy is named John Piper. He has had a profound impact in my life. John Pipler was a pastor in Minneapolis for years. He wrote books. One of them is called *Desiring God*. It has had a profound impact in my life.

Another is called *Hunger for God*. It has had a profound impact in my life.

John Piper is probably the author living... I usually choose dead authors because they finish well, but John Piper is probably the living author that has had a bigger impact in my life than anybody else.

So, can you imagine getting to preach in his pulpit? One time he was going to be on sabbatical for four weeks and the last week of that sabbatical as he was gone, they invited me to come and preach for him.

I remember the morning that I was getting to go to preach for him, I was told that this is the last day of Pastor Todd's sabbatical being the very last Sunday of the month he is gone, so somebody had said to me, "There is a good chance Pastor John is going to be there this Sunday because he is going to be back."

So, in my mind driving to the prayer thing, church was going to start at 8:00, but they asked me to come at 7:00 so we could come together and plan and pray together before the service. In my mind, as I was getting to the church, I thought, I can't wait to meet my hero, John Piper.

I get there and some of the leaders come together and they say, "Why don't we start to pray?" and it dawned on me that who is not in the room is John Piper yet. I was told he was going to be here. They said, "let's pray, and it bothered me that John Piper wasn't there to pray, not because John Piper should be praying with me but it bothered me because I realized I had been thinking about stuff I was going to say in prayer. I was going to impress John Piper.

You ever have somebody say something while you are praying with them? Like you're praying with someone and they say something in prayer. And in the back of your mind, you are multitasking. You're like amen, Lord, but you are also like, oh, that's good.

The next time I'm in another prayer huddle with other people, not including that person that just said it, I'm going to bring it.

So, in my mind, I thought, I've got an arsenal, I'm a professional prayer person. I go to a lot of places and pray with a lot of people. and I thought in my mind, I was like John Piper? Forget him hearing me preach, wait until he hears me pray. He's going to be like, "Who is this "Iranian young man?" He's the son in the ministry that I've never really had.

So, I'm there and I'm praying and... Do you ever peek when your praying? Do you ever open your eyes? I remember, the whole time we were praying, I keep looking up and the prayer circle is going around and it's like five people away from me, four people away from me.... I keep on thinking when is John Piper going to get here to hear me pray?

Anybody else? I'm the only one?

God is saying "you are robbing yourself when you, who I am doing this with, becomes this thing where like you've elevated it with the people and not the God of this universe. He's saying, "What I want out of this is you and me."

Everything about this is about intimacy with God. So, intention and intimacy and the third one is intentionality. How am I approaching this in the first place? I love Verse 7. Verse says, in Verse 7 it says and when you pray, don't keep on babbling like the pagans because they are thinking they are going to be heard because of their many words. The ridiculousness that they are going to try to impress God with their three syllable words. Look at all the words, God that I know that end with tion. Sanctification, Redemption, Justification... and God's like wow, you are trying to impress me with words that I gave you? I'm not just the one that created words, I am the Word.

So often, we try to impress God with like with this John McArthur thing that we learned one time it's just silly games that we play. We don't

need a ton of words, by the way. God knows what you need whether you use the words or not. God knows what you need more than you know what you need. Sometimes we use the words. And... I think it was the great theologian Garth Brooks who said, "Sometimes I thank God for unanswered prayers"

Because sometimes we're asking God, "God, please let her not break up with me and God's like, "Oh, she's a dumpster fire. I need her to break up with you."

God knows what you need before you even know how to ask for it. even before you know what to say. God knows better than you what you need.

By the way, nothing is ever a surprise to God. God's not ever sleeping and they 'never have to wake him up to wake him up and go quick God the cancer is back, she needs you. God is always there, always on time. Nothing ever occurs to God.

And yet we try to babble with many words and lather up spiritual Jesus juke language In order to try to impress a God who is saying, "I just want your heart. And I just want you to want me.

Next week, one of my best friends in the world, Alex Himaya is here to preach. It's not lost on me that in the shadow of a centennial when we celebrate 250 years of this great nation, pastor Ted has invited two middle eastern people back to back. How do you like that. Alex is from Egypt and I'm from Iran.

I love Alex Hyma, he's amazing. When I met Alex, he wasn't a pastor of a massive church with multiple campuses all over Oklahoma. When I met Alex, he was a youth pastor. I remember one time he called me pretty late one afternoon I answered the phone and I could tell

something was up when he called me because his voice was different. He was like “hey man” and I was like “hey buddy, are you okay?” I could instantly tell something was up.

He goes;” I need you to pray for me. I’m in the back of an ambulance.” He started explaining what had happened. Alex was a youth pastor at this time and he left on a Wednesday night. He left this youth building

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Have you ever walked out in the summertime out of a cold air-conditioned youth group of a big building. And when you walked out into the humidity of the South.... He walked out and he was running to his Honda Accord to get in and get going. He was late and trying to get home. When he got in, his glasses had kind of fogged up. He sits down in his car. He’s running late, so he’s not thinking about it. He turns his car on and his glasses are messy because he’s gone from the cold to the humid air. He takes his glasses off, starts cleaning his glasses, and he’s not paying attention while he gets going. He puts his car in drive, he’s driving while he’s cleaning his glasses and he’s blind without them. As he’s putting them on, he looks and he’s going about 30 miles an hour and right in front of his car is this large light that’s on a big concrete pillar. This pillar is right in front of him and so he said, “I just hit this pillar dead on. He said” I’m okay, but I’m not okay so I need you to pray.” In the back of my mind I’m like I am so glad he’s okay and no one can ever take this away from me.

We started ragging on each other and I’m like Bro, I’m so glad you are all right. we start laughing about the fact that he was driving down that road and as he was driving down that road in that parking lot, he hit... I said, “What do you mean you when you said jha! He said I was going to say Jesus, but the air bag stopped me and all I got out was jha. How many of you believe you don’t need to say it. How many of you believe Jesus knew before he even knew before he even knew what he needed.

We walk with that confidence and that kind of intentionality. Who am I? How am I approaching this? I'm coming knowing that everything that I am going to say to God in conversation, everything that I'm every going with God, for God, in my working out my salvation with fear and trembling and worship. Everything in the Christian life, everything that is happening is ultimately happening so that I am growing in my love affair for him.

So, the aim of all of this, the intentionality, the purpose in all of this is ultimately I'm approaching this not with like I'm going to do this or that He will do this. When I come before the throne of God and I begin to pray, I'm not coming to God to say words so that we can begin a discussion on how to play our lives. I'm coming and I'm saying things out loud that it that will help me grow and I can discover his plan for my life. So, this is for me, the gift to me.

So intention, intimacy, and intentionality. . And what is not lost on me is that we are talking today about the illustration of everything in the Christian life and it's intent, as it relates in this particular moment, to prayer and what I don't want to do is celebrate this idea and not submit to it. so, I've made sure that we have exactly 10 minutes and 20 seconds left of our time with you, so I've made sure that the biggest part of our time this morning is not just us talking about this, but but walking into a few minutes that we are going to set aside since we talked about prayer to actually pray.

